

Kanuri language

Kanuri (/kəˈnuːri/[3]) is a dialect continuum spoken by some four million people, as of 1987, in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, as well as small minorities in southern Libya and by a diaspora in Sudan.

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Background

At the turn of the 21st century, its two main dialects, Manga Kanuri and Yerwa Kanuri (also called Beriberi, which its speakers consider to be pejorative), were spoken by 9,700,000 people in Central Africa.^[4] It belongs to the Western Saharan subphylum of Nilo-Saharan. Kanuri is the language associated with the Kanem and Bornu empires which dominated the Lake Chad region for a thousand years.

The basic word order of Kanuri sentences is subject–object–verb. It is typologically unusual in simultaneously having postpositions and post-nominal modifiers – for example, "Bintu's pot" would be expressed as *nje Bintu-be*, "pot Bintu-of".

Kanuri has three tones: high, low, and falling. It has an extensive system of consonantal lenition; for example, *sa-* "they" + *-buma* "have eaten" → *za-wuna* "they have eaten".

Kanuri	
Kànùrí	
Native to	Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon
Region	Lake Chad
Ethnicity	Kanuri (Yerwa Kanuri etc.), Kanembu
Native speakers	8.6 million (1998–2015) ^[1]
Language family	Nilo-Saharan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Saharan ▪ Western Saharan ▪ Kanuri
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	kr (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/parts/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=kr)
ISO 639-2	kau (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/parts/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=227)
ISO 639-3	kau – inclusive code Individual codes: knc – Central Kanuri kby – Manga Kanuri krt – Tumari Kanuri bms – Bilma Kanuri kb1 – Kanembu

Traditionally a local lingua franca, its usage has declined in recent decades. Most first-language speakers speak Hausa or Arabic as a second language.

Geographic distribution

Kanuri is spoken mainly in lowlands of the Chad Basin, with speakers in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan and Libya.

Varieties

Ethnologue divides Kanuri into the following languages, while many linguists (e.g. Cyffer 1998) regard them as dialects of a single language. The first three are spoken by ethnic Kanuri and thought by them as dialects of their language.

- Central Kanuri
- Manga Kanuri
- Tumari Kanuri
- Kanembu

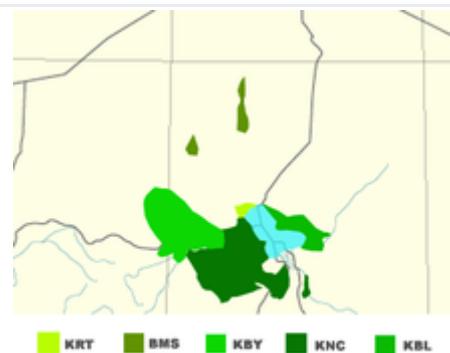
The variety attested in 17th century Qur'anic glosses is known as Old Kanembu. In the context of religious recitation and commentaries, a heavily archaizing descendant of this is still used, called Tarjumo.

Glottolog

kanu1279 (<http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kanu1279>)^[2]

Linguasphere

02-AAA-a
(+Kanembu 02-AAA-b)



Map of the majority usage of the five major languages of the Kanuri language group.

- BMS Kanuri, Bilma
- KNC Kanuri, Central
- KBY Kanuri, Manga
- KRT Kanuri, Tumari
- KBL Kanembu

Phonology

Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
<u>Plosive</u>	(p) b		t d			k g	?
<u>Affricate</u>				tʃ dʒ			
<u>Fricative</u>	(ɸ β)	f	s z	ʃ		(χ)	h
<u>Nasal</u>	m		n			(ŋ)	
<u>Lateral</u>			l	(l)			
<u>Trill</u>			r				
<u>Approximant</u>	w				j		

- There may also exist prenasalized voiced stop consonant sounds /mb, nd, ŋ/. Although it is not known whether they are considered phonemic.
- The sound /p/ occurs mainly as an allophone of /b/, when following another voiceless plosive. It also may be in free alteration with /f/, however; it is still represented in the standard Kanuri orthography.^[5]

- A voiceless fricative [ɸ] occurs as an allophone of /f/ when preceding back vowels /o, u/. A voiced fricative [β] occurs as an allophone of /b/, when occurring in intervocalic positions. A voiced fricative [ɣ] occurs as an allophone of /g/, when occurring intervocally between central vowels.
- A retroflex lateral sound [ɭ] is heard when /l/ is followed by /i/.
- [ɳ] occurs as an allophone of /n/ when preceding velar stop consonants. Often times, the stop sounds are deleted or misheard, so just the nasal sound [ɳ] is mainly heard.^[6]

Vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i	(ɨ)	u
<u>Close-mid</u>	e		o
<u>Mid</u>		ə	
<u>Open-mid</u>			ʌ
<u>Open</u>		a	

- [ɨ] is heard as an allophone of /ə/.

Written Kanuri

Kanuri has been written using the Ajami Arabic script, mainly in religious or court contexts, for at least four hundred years.^[7] More recently, it is also sometimes written in a modified Latin script. The Gospel of John published in 1965 was produced in Roman and Arabic script.

Alphabet

A standardized romanized orthography (known as the Standard Kanuri Orthography in Nigeria) was developed by the Kanuri Research Unit and the Kanuri Language Board. Its elaboration, based on the dialect of Maiduguri, was carried out by the Orthography Committee of the Kanuri Language Board, under the Chairmanship of Abba Sadiq, Waziri of Borno. It was officially approved by the Kanuri Language Board in Maiduguri, Nigeria, in 1975.^[8]

Letters used : a b c d e ə f g h i j k l m n ny o p r ɻ s sh t u w y z.^[9]

Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
First person	wú, ú	àndí
Second person	ní	nàndí, nàyí
Third person	tí	tàndí, tàyí

See also

- [Kanuri word list \(Wiktionary\)](#)

Sources

- Norbert Cyffer & John P. Hutchison (eds.) *Dictionary of the Kanuri Language (Publications in African languages and linguistics, 13)*. Foris Publications 1990. [ISBN 90-6765-412-4](#).
- Norbert Cyffer, *We Learn Kanuri* (book and 2 audio cassettes), [ISBN 3-927620-01-7](#), Rüdiger Köppe Verlag: Köln 1993.
- Norbert Cyffer, *English-Kanuri Dictionary*, [ISBN 3-927620-44-0](#), Rüdiger Köppe Verlag: Köln 1994.
- Norbert Cyffer, *A Sketch of Kanuri*. Rüdiger Köppe Verlag: Köln 1998.
- Documentation for ISO 639 identifier: kau (<http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=kau>)

Notes

1. Kanuri (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/kau>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
Central Kanuri (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/knc>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
Manga Kanuri (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/kby>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
Tumari Kanuri (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/krt>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
Bilma Kanuri (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/bms>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
Kanembu (<https://www.ethnologue.com/21/language/kbl>) at *Ethnologue* (21st ed., 2018)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Kanuri-Kanembu" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kanu1279>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Laurie Bauer, 2007, *The Linguistics Student's Handbook*, Edinburgh
4. "Kanuri language" (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kanuri-language>). *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
5. Hutchison, John P. (1981). *The Kanuri Language: A Reference Grammar*. : University of Wisconsin.
6. Cyffer, Norbert (1998). *A sketch of Kanuri*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
7. kanuri.net (http://www.kanuri.net/related_projects2.php?aID=37) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20061108031954/http://www.kanuri.net/related_projects2.php?aID=37) 2006-11-08 at the Wayback Machine.
8. *Dictionary of the Kanuri language*. Norbert Cyffer, John P. Hutchison, 1990. [ISBN 90-6765-412-4](#)
9. According to *alphabet kanuri — arrété 213-99 de la République du Niger* (http://www.sciences.univ-nantes.fr/info/perso/permanents/enguehard/recherche/Afrique/alphabet_kanuri.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20090627072551/http://www.sciences.univ-nantes.fr/info/perso/permanents/enguehard/recherche/Afrique/alphabet_kanuri.htm) 2009-06-27 at the Wayback Machine (Chantal Enguehard – Université de Nantes) the letter schwa used in Kanuri is encoded in Unicode with U+01DD instead of U+0259, and its uppercase is Ë U+018E instead of Æ U+018F.
10. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Nilo-Saharan/Saharan/Manga%20dictionary%20Unicode.pdf>

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External links

- [Kanuri Vocabulary List](http://wold.clld.org/language/5) (<http://wold.clld.org/language/5>) (from the World Loanword Database)
- PanAfrican L10n page on Kanuri (<http://www.bisharat.net/wikidoc/pmwiki.php/PanAfrLoc/Kanuri>)
- [Alphabet Kanuri](https://web.archive.org/web/20090627072551/http://www.sciences.univ-nantes.fr/info/perso/permanents/enguehard/recherche/Afrique/alphabet_kanuri.htm) (https://web.archive.org/web/20090627072551/http://www.sciences.univ-nantes.fr/info/perso/permanents/enguehard/recherche/Afrique/alphabet_kanuri.htm)
- [Dictionary of Manga Kanuri](http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Nilo-Saharan/Saharan/Manga%20dictionary%20Unicode.pdf) (<http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Nilo-Saharan/Saharan/Manga%20dictionary%20Unicode.pdf>)

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